

Draft Magherafelt Area Plan 2015 (dMAP) – Proposal MT 26 – Eastern Bypass Transportation Scheme – Departmental Statement.

At the first pre-Examination meeting on the above Plan held in Magherafelt on 27th August 2008, the Department gave an undertaking to provide a statement on its website by 30th September 2008 to clarify the status of the Road Proposal MT 26, the Eastern Bypass.

A Transportation Scheme (MT 26) for the provision of an Eastern Bypass around Magherafelt is identified within dMAP and protected through Policy TRAN 1. The scheme was one of a number of proposals contained in the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 published in 2005. The dMAP proposal takes forward the bypass included in the adopted plan for Magherafelt District, the Magherafelt Area Plan 1976-1996.

Review of Route of Magherafelt Bypass

In 2006 Roads Service commissioned consultants Mouchel to assist Roads Service to progress Magherafelt bypass through the completion of statutory procedures including an Environmental Statement, Direction Order and Vesting Order.

Roads Service requested Mouchel to review earlier work and to update the traffic modelling for Magherafelt. Previous traffic modelling was based on surveys carried out in 2000 and 2001.

In June 2007 Mouchel prepared a Scheme Assessment Report Stage 1 (SAR1) identifying the environmental and engineering advantages, disadvantages and constraints associated with the route corridors available for Magherafelt Bypass in accordance with Departmental procedures.

Following this DRD Roads Service engaged in a public consultation exercise to consider alternative routes for this Bypass in October 2007. Roads Service arranged a Public Consultation day on 24th October 2007 for the proposed A31, Magherafelt Bypass and published an accompanying booklet 'Exhibition of Proposed Route Corridors'.

Roads Service advised that a second Public Exhibition was arranged for 9th January 2008 where the 'Emerging Preferred Option' was presented. An accompanying booklet was published 'Public Exhibition of the Preferred Route'.

As a result of the detailed examination of the advantages, disadvantages and constraints, the preferred route is substantially different from that contained in dMAP.

An Environmental Statement, Notice of Intention to make a Direction Order and Notice of Intention to make a Vesting Order were published in May 2008. The closing date for receipt of responses to the consultation process was 25th July 2008. It is envisaged that a Public Inquiry into the preferred route will be held in Spring 2009 prior to making the Statutory Orders.

Government is now committed to an alternative route for the Bypass and this will be taken through a separate inquiry procedure to the dMAP Independent Examination. Roads Service has advised the Department that it no longer seeks protection of the MT 26 Bypass scheme as an alternative proposal is currently being brought forward under the statutory processes contained within the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

The Department would advise that Policy MT 26 should now be regarded as withdrawn from dMAP in full.

The development limit for this part of the town proposed in dMAP under Designation MT 01, and the large number of objections to the dMAP Magherafelt Development Limit, will be considered at Stage 2 of the Independent Examination, which may result in some or all of the 'excluded' sites being included within the town boundary and a consequent redrawing of the development limit for this part of the town. The implications of the uplift in the Housing Growth Indicator for the District following adjustments to the Regional Development Strategy may well have an impact in this respect in the consideration of such sites and any consequent effect on the proposed development limit. The Departmental approach to the Adjusted Housing Growth Indicator for Magherafelt is published on the Planning Service's website concurrently as a separate statement.

DoE (NI) Planning Service
30 September 2008